United States
Office of Personnel Management

Fingerprint Identification Series

GS-0072

Fingerprint Identification Series

GS-0072

CONTENTS

SERIES DEFINITION

This series covers positions that involve classifying, searching, verifying, and filing fingerprints and other vestigial prints (such as footprints or palm prints) for identifying persons. The work requires a knowledge of the methods used in fingerprint classification and identification.

This standard supersedes the standard for the Fingerprint Identification Series, GS-0072, issued in June 1957.

EXCLUSION

Excluded from this occupation are positions which primarily involve administering, supervising, or performing clerical work in the processing of incoming or outgoing mail and the systematic arrangement of records for storage, when such duties require the application of established mail or file methods and procedures. These positions are classified in the Mail and File Series, GS-0305.

OCCUPATIONAL INFORMATION

Fingerprint identification involves taking prints, classifying them for use in subsequent operations, filing them according to classification and searching existing records for identification purposes. In addition some fingerprint specialist assignments include testifying in court on fingerprints taken or identified.

The following is descriptive of several significant terms and procedures used in fingerprint identification work.

Standard fingerprints

Most fingerprints are kept on cards which show an individual's 10 fingerprints. The prints are formed by inking each finger and making its impression on a standard fingerprint card with spaces for all 10 fingers. The standard cards are taken from three groups; civilian employees and military personnel, victims of such disasters as floods or airplane crashes, and arrested subjects.

The fingerprints on standard cards are classified by use of the Henry System of fingerprint classification (see below). The classification is based on characteristics of all 10 fingers, and it is used either to file the card, as in the case of civilian employees, or to search for other cards on an individual, as in the case of arrested subjects.

Single and latent fingerprints

In addition to standard fingerprints agencies also maintain single fingerprints. These records facilitate the identification of latent fingerprints.

-- *Single fingerprints* are individual fingerprints which are kept in a separate file. This file is composed of photographic copies of fingerprints of notorious criminals, extortionists, kidnappers, bank robbers, burglars, sneak thieves, etc. The single prints are:

- Placed on two separate cards, one for the right hand and one for the left;
- Classified individually in accordance with the agency's single fingerprint system;
- Used to identify latent fingerprints left by a subject during commission of a crime.

-- *Latent prints* are impressions (or markings), which are usually rather indistinct or incomplete, left by oily matter or perspiration exuded from the friction ridges of the fingers, palms of hands, and feet on a variety of substances. Latent prints are usually found at the scenes of crimes. They can be:

- Developed by means of powders and/or chemicals to make them more visible for photographing or preservation;
- Lifted by applying tape to the print, peeling the tape from the surface, and photographing or preserving the "lift;"
- Compared with fingerprints of known individuals to identify the person who left the latent prints.

The Henry System

A key characteristic of positions in this occupation is the requirement for knowledge of the Henry System of fingerprint classification. This system is based on two important characteristics of the bulbs on the inside of the end joint of the fingers and thumbs:

(a) The formation of the ridges into distinguishable contours, which are classified as arches, loops, and whorls; and

(b) The designation of two fixed points to aid in classification, the delta and the core, together with the ridges between these two points. The Henry System enables sets of fingerprints having the same characteristics to be filed together. This facilitates searching for the purpose of comparing one set of prints against another, especially when a file contains a very large number of fingerprint cards.

Basically, the Henry System classifies the distinctive information found on the bulbs of the fingers and thumbs into a numerical and alphabetic formula having six major divisions: Primary, secondary, major, subsecondary, final, and key.

To illustrate, the primary classification is the numerical value of the whorls in a set of prints and takes the form of a fraction ranging from 1 over 1 to 32 over 32. The formula is extended further by using the remaining classifications. Because of the growth of the various fingerprint files, this system has been modified by additional subdivisions which are called "extensions" and "superextensions."

Extensions and superextensions

When groups of similar fingerprints in the files become so large that, even when all divisions of classification are used, the searching becomes difficult, the groups are subdivided further. These subdivisions, or "extensions," narrow down the area which must be searched to match prints in the future and thus reduce searching time. For example, in the large whorl groups, an extension has been developed called the "WCDX extension." W, C, D, and X indicate types of whorls which may be found on index fingers. Other extensions such as the "Special Loop extension" have similar, highly specialized functions. As the number of extensions in use increases, the person doing this type of work needs a more detailed and extensive knowledge of the refinements and intricacies of the entire system of classifying and identifying fingerprints.

ORGANIZATION OF THE STANDARD

Part I

This part covers positions that involve sorting, classifying, searching for, sequencing, filing, and matching basic or standard "10-finger" fingerprint cards. Grade levels for nonsupervisory positions covered by this part range from GS-2 through GS-7.

Authorized title: *Fingerprint Examiner*

Positions which require supervisory qualifications are identified by the prefix "supervisory."

Part II

This part covers positions that involve examining, developing, and classifying fragments of vestigial prints left by fingers, palms, or feet found on objects usually associated with crimes. They also involve taking prints from victims of disasters or accidents in order to make positive identifications. In addition, they involve using technical processes (such as treating items with special powders and chemicals to bring out prints), testifying in court to explain findings, and

teaching others the various processes involved in developing latent prints. Grade levels for nonsupervisory positions covered by this part range from GS-7 through GS-12.

Authorized title: *Fingerprint Specialist*

Positions which require supervisory qualifications are identified by the prefix "supervisory."

CLASSIFICATION CRITERIA

The classification criteria used in this standard are described in terms of *Assignment characteristics* and *Level of responsibility*.

Assignment characteristics

This factor deals with the nature and scope of assignments. Nonsupervisory assignments range from routine sorting of fingerprint cards to treating stolen objects with chemicals to make latent prints visible.

Level of responsibility

This factor measures the nature and extent of supervisory guidance and review received, and the importance of decisions made by the employee. Positions range from those receiving detailed instructions and close supervision to those involving independent work with little or no supervision, such as conducting a final review of fingerprints, verifying that a card on file contains prints identical to those on another card.

Knowledges, skills, and abilities required. The kinds and levels of knowledges, skills, and abilities required to perform fingerprint identification work are not described separately in the grade-level criteria, since they are reflected in the discussion of other factors.

Employees engaged in fingerprint identification work are required to have knowledge of the Henry System of fingerprint classification. They must know a wide variety of procedures related to fingerprint identification, and be familiar with the location and purpose of various types of fingerprint files and other records.

Because of the nature of fingerprint identification work and the serious consequences of delay or error, speed in correctly classifying and searching and absolute accuracy in identification are inherent requirements at all grade levels.

In addition to the basic knowledges of the fingerprint classification system, fingerprint specialists who deal with development and identification of latent fingerprints must have specialized knowledges of the chemicals, procedures, and equipment used in developing latent prints on a

great variety of substances and materials, in preserving such prints, and in identifying prints to a degree of certainty that will provide positive identification of wanted or deceased persons. These employees must also understand courtroom procedures and have the ability to testify in criminal cases and administrative hearings.

NOTES TO USERS

Supervisory positions should be evaluated by reference to the *Supervisory Grade-Evaluation Guide*.

Many fingerprint examiners and specialists provide on-the-job training for employees at lower levels. Because this responsibility is a continuing part of the occupation as a whole, it has not been specifically described. Of course, any position that involves, as the preponderant assignment, instructional and training responsibilities, should be evaluated by reference to the evaluation criteria in the Grade-Evaluation Guide for Instructor and Specialist Positions Involving Education and Training Work.

This standard does not provide specific grade-level criteria for nonsupervisory "verifier" positions. Verification work involves responsibility for providing a double check on the accuracy of the identifications made by fingerprint examiners throughout the Technical Section and in the Assembly Section. This involves making a detailed comparison of the current submission with all previous records in each case to determine whether the identification is correct (i.e., that the new set of prints matches the set of prints in the file). This level of review and verification requires the application of the same basic skills, knowledges, and abilities in performing what is essentially a repetition of the work of the original examiner in making the initial identification, and additional grade credit is not appropriate. Such positions are classified at the same grade level as the predominant level of work being verified.

PART I

FINGERPRINT EXAMINER GS-0072-2

Assignment characteristics

This is the basic entry level that involves learning the basic processes and procedures used in classifying, searching, sequencing, and filing standard fingerprint cards. This involves:

-- A comprehensive program of formal classroom instruction emphasizing the Henry System of fingerprint classification.

-- On-the-job training performing sorting, sequencing, routing, and distributing fingerprint cards and the simplest classification, searching, and filing under detailed step-by-step directions. The prints are clear, distinct, legible, and contain only readily identifiable patterns.

Level of responsibility

Entry level assignments are carefully selected and controlled to provide training. The training instructor gives detailed directions and reviews all completed work thoroughly.

FINGERPRINT EXAMINER GS-0072-3

Assignment characteristics

The assignments at the GS-3 level characteristically exceed those at the GS-2 level in that they are not basic entry positions. They involve classifying, searching, sequencing, and filing simple and clear, easy-to-identify incoming new prints. Typically the work is performed within a single unit.

Level of responsibility

The training instructor or supervisor gives the employee detailed instructions at each step of new assignment and reviews the completed work.

The GS-3 Fingerprint Examiner uses judgment in making the initial determination of the similarity or dissimilarity of prints assigned for comparison. This judgment is closely evaluated by the supervisor or by a more experienced worker.

FINGERPRINT EXAMINER GS-0072-4

Assignment characteristics

GS-4 assignments typically combine the classifying, searching, sequencing, and filing, on a regular, production basis of standard fingerprints presenting no particular problems with assignments designed to develop skills in dealing with difficult fingerprint classification problems. GS-4 Fingerprint Examiners classify, search, sequence, and file standard fingerprints which require relatively few references to establish identification, are reasonably legible, and contain few intricate or involved patterns. Although these prints are made up of a variety of patterns in combinations they are sufficiently standardized that they fall within well established basic categories and do not require unusually fine classification. In these duties the GS-4 Examiner uses mature judgment in establishing initial identity or dissimilarity of prints assigned.

Assignments at the GS-4 level characteristically exceed those at the GS-3 level in terms of variety and complexity of fingerprints assigned, knowledge of the organization of fingerprint files and procedures, and independence of operation.

GS-4 Fingerprint Examiners are more familiar with fingerprint identification principles, techniques, formulas, procedures, and methods than GS-3 employees. For example, the GS-4 Fingerprint Examiner has a good knowledge of the fingerprint filing systems, of the arrangement and sequence of fingerprint files and the levels of difficulty of the various filing units throughout the section.

Level of responsibility

GS-4 assignments are made by the supervisor and are performed in strict conformity with prescribed instructions, pattern definitions, sequencing schedules, filing charts, administrative regulations and procedures, and other pertinent oral and written instruction. The supervisor provides instructions regarding any aspects of the work which are new to the examiner and is available for advice.

Finished work is reviewed in the following ways:

-- The supervisor reviews all prints that the examiner has determined cannot be matched with prints already on file. The supervisor reviews for accuracy of classification, thoroughness of searching, and dissimilarity of prints searched. This review is for the purpose of assessing the progress in learning the work but does not involve a review of each step or phase as it is completed.

-- Prints that the examiner "identifies" (i.e., finds to be an exact match to prints already in the files) are routed to the Verification Section to be verified. The verifier, typically an

experienced fingerprint examiner, essentially repeats the classification and identification process to assure that the prints are in fact an exact match.

The GS-4 Fingerprint Examiner exercises mature judgment in establishing initial identity or dissimilarity of prints, and is expected to recognize problems when they arise and request assistance from supervisor.

FINGERPRINT EXAMINER GS-0072-5

Assignment characteristics

GS-5 Fingerprint Examiners classify, search, sequence, and file difficult standard fingerprints on a regular and recurring basis. Difficult prints assigned include blurred and scarred impressions, missing fingers, amputations, deformities, and those of individuals with skin diseases. These prints require extensive classification and referencing, prolonged searching, and a thorough knowledge of classification extensions as well as the filing system to accommodate them.

In addition, GS-5 Fingerprint Examiners typically are designated to perform special assignments because of their experience and their familiarity with particular files units. Examples of special assignments at the GS-5 level include assisting in training or guiding the work of lower-graded examiners in learning the locations of files, the flow of work, the sequencing of prints, and other aspects of fingerprint identification work; and locating prints for which charge cards have been placed in file through extensive checking and searching.

Assignments at the GS-5 level differ from those at the GS-4 level in the complexity of the classification and searching work because of the difficulty of the fingerprints assigned.

Level of responsibility

The GS-5 Fingerprint Examiner works essentially without specific instructions and guidance from the supervisor. The supervisor is available, on request, to give instructions and guidance on the interpretation of questionable patterns, ridge counts, doubtful tracings, and references.

GS-5 Fingerprint Examiners are individually responsible for initiating and conducting appropriate searches, for recognizing the need for searching other classifications, and for establishing the initial identification or dissimilarity of the print being searched (i. e., to determine whether one set is identical with another set that is on file). GS-5 Fingerprint Examiners have more authority for selecting the better set of prints to serve as the master fingerprint card than do GS-4 examiners.

Finished work is reviewed in the following ways:

-- The supervisor reviews all criminal prints that the examiner has determined cannot be matched with prints already on file. The supervisor reviews for accuracy of classification, thoroughness of searching, and dissimilarity of prints searched. This review does not involve a review of each step or phase as it is completed. The supervisor makes only a cursory review of nonidentified civil prints.

-- Prints that the examiner "identifies" (i.e., finds to be an exact match to prints already in the files) are routed to the Verification Section to be verified. The verifier, typically an experienced fingerprint examiner, essentially repeats the classification and identification process to assure that the prints are in fact an exact match.

FINGERPRINT EXAMINER GS-0072-6

Assignment characteristics

GS-6 Fingerprint Examiners classify, search, sequence, and file a wide variety of very difficult standard 10-finger prints on a regular and recurring basis. Very difficult prints assigned include those that are made up of patterns or combinations of patterns that necessitate unusually fine classifications and the predominant use of specialized superextensions, and have obscured patterns that make interpretation questionable. Typically, the searching and classification require prolonged and painstaking search in numerous searching units where additional classification formula and multiple superextensions are widely used.

Because of their thorough and extensive knowledge of the overall operation of the entire identification organization dealing with standard 10-finger prints, GS-6 Fingerprint Examiners perform various regular and "one-time" special processing assignments. The following are illustrative of these assignments:

-- Expanding the files. This judgment is made in looking through the entire criminal file to identify overcrowded segments of the files. The examiner takes action to make room for additional fingerprint cards. The examiner decides how far to extend the classification (extension, or superextension) and still comprise a reasonable and workable breakdown of categories.

-- Completely re-searching fingerprint cases on which questions have been raised or an inquiry made that suggests that the examiner who made the earlier "identification" missed something significant.

-- Completely re-searching fingerprint cases involving "wanted" notorious criminals and fugitives.

-- Completely searching criminal and "special" fingerprints in cases for which previous search in two other units indicate that further searching is required.

GS-6 Fingerprint Examiner positions differ from those at the GS-5 level in the extent of searching that is required, the number and complexity of the references involved, and in the complexity of the classification extensions and superextensions that must be used. Also, GS-6 Fingerprint Examiners search in numerous files units, whereas searching at the GS-5 level is primarily confined within a particular unit.

Level of responsibility

GS-6 Fingerprint Examiners receive their assignments with only an outline of the goals to be achieved. The examiners proceed with a minimum of supervisory assistance and solve most of the novel or unusually difficult classification and identification problems without specific instructions. In analyzing defective prints, GS-6 Fingerprint Examiners judge whether correct print patterns can be inferred from smudged or indistinct prints, and indicate classification categories for further search-- weighing the risk in classifying prints as compared with returning them.

GS-6 Fingerprint Examiners are expected to classify the defective prints if at all possible or to make the decision to return them for reprinting. This differs from the GS-5 level, which involves passing defective prints that the examiner cannot classify to the supervisor or to an examiner in a higher grade level for resolution.

Finished work is reviewed in the following ways:

-- The supervisor reviews all criminal and special-type prints that the examiner has determined cannot be matched with prints already on file. The supervisor reviews for accuracy of classification, thoroughness of searching, and dissimilarity of prints searched.

-- Prints that the examiner "identifies" (i.e., finds to be an exact match to prints already in the files) are routed to the Verification Section to be verified. The verifier, typically an experienced fingerprint examiner, essentially repeats the classification and identification process to assure that the prints are in fact an exact match.

FINGERPRINT EXAMINER GS-0072-7

Assignment characteristics

GS-7 Fingerprint Examiners classify, search, sequence, and file extremely difficult fingerprints on a regular and recurring basis. Extremely difficult prints assigned include those that are deficient in critical parts of the pattern (for example, fingerprints are distorted, mutilated, partially printed, faintly impressed, or fragmentary), present unusually severe problems of classification and identification, and require great resourcefulness and ingenuity to resolve (i.e., involve searching prints and correspondence in any of the units and segments of the fingerprint identification file), and require an expert knowledge of the Henry System and related identification systems, including the full range of extensions and superextensions through to the most exhaustive classification breakdown.

Some fingerprints that are of the level of difficulty described above are less than 10-finger impressions. The discrimination required in classifying and identifying other fingerprints of this level of difficulty is often further hampered by having to work from fingerprint reproductions such as photographs of prints, negatives, facsimile, or wire transmissions.

GS-7 assignments often require pattern reconstruction and typically require extensive and specialized classification and referencing, and exhaustive searching under all possible classifications, combinations, and references.

Level of responsibility

GS-7 Fingerprint Examiners are experts in classifying and identifying the most complex nonlatent fingerprints. Therefore, standard procedures often do not apply specifically to the work they are assigned.

The supervisor assigns work in terms of goals to be achieved and evaluates performance mainly through work records and reports.

Finished work is reviewed in the following ways:

-- The supervisor reviews all prints that the examiner has determined cannot be matched with prints already on file for accuracy of classification and thoroughness of searching.

-- Prints that the examiner "identifies" (i.e., finds to be an exact match to prints already in the files) are routed to the Verification Section to be verified. The verifier, typically an experienced fingerprint examiner, essentially repeats the classification and identification process to assure that the prints are in fact, an exact match.

GS-7 Fingerprint Examiners consult the supervisor only on such problems as interpretation of especially critical print patterns when the advice or opinion of another expert is required.

GS-7 Fingerprint Examiners have the final authority in determining whether civil prints on which legibility has been questioned by examiners in a lower grade-level should be rejected and returned.

PART II

FINGERPRINT SPECIALIST GS-0072-7

Assignment characteristics

GS-7 Fingerprint Specialist assignments typically involve a specialized formal and informal training program to prepare the participants for work involving developing, preserving, and interpreting latent fingerprints. This training includes the history, biological nature, and legal aspects of fingerprint identification, the development of fingerprints that are left on various materials by using powders, chemicals, and lights, and the operation of the special equipment found in a latent fingerprint laboratory. As employees advance through training, they work with and assist higher graded fingerprint specialists by performing such duties as classifying and matching a variety of prints, and preparing reports on comparisons of particular latent prints with prints on file.

Fingerprint specialists at the GS-7 level are assigned latent fingerprint projects that involve a low level of difficulty and complexity. An example is developing latent prints on a piece of nonporous material such as a glass bottle. This is done by visually inspecting the evidence, selecting the proper development medium to use, and then determining the proper consistency of the medium and the method of application. For instance, the prints on a dark bottle would show up better by dusting with a fine grey powder, while those on a light bottle would develop better with copper powder or dark powder.

Level of responsibility

GS-7 Fingerprint Specialists in training for latent fingerprint identification work receive close supervision and they are assigned latent fingerprint work that presents few, if any, technical problems. Fingerprint specialists in a higher grade or supervisors explain procedures to them and conduct demonstrations of basic techniques for developing and identifying latent prints.

FINGERPRINT SPECIALIST GS-0072-9

Assignment characteristics

GS-9 Fingerprint Specialist assignments typically involve developing and identifying latent fingerprints in relatively uncomplicated latent print cases and assisting higher graded specialists in complex and latent print cases. By comparison, GS-7 assignments in latent print work are essentially training assignments involving prints of a low level of difficulty and complexity.

Typical latent fingerprint assignments at the GS-9 level involve:

-- Using cleaners, tissue builders, formaldehyde, and other substances to prepare the fingers of dead persons for actual identification work;

-- Preparing charts and other exhibits used in court testimony;

-- Developing latent fingerprints on items of evidence that present relatively flat or nonporous surfaces or similar surfaces on which prints are readily detected;

-- Searching files of single and latent fingerprints, photographs, appearance records of individuals, and other files to make identifications;

-- Giving testimony in court cases that involve prints that are readily developed and identified, and cases that involve a minimum amount of notoriety and public interest.

Examples of cases which involve latent fingerprint work of this level of difficulty and complexity include safe burglaries, extortion cases, and thefts from interstate shipments.

Level of responsibility

GS-9 Fingerprint Specialists must learn and apply advanced methods of latent print development, such as the use of side lighting and filters, because of the added complexity of the cases assigned.

Supervision is close during the initial phases of developing prints to ensure that fingerprints are not smeared or the items of evidence destroyed. As the specialists develop and are assigned the full range of basic latent print duties, supervision is no longer close.

The supervisor selects cases for the GS-9 specialist, both to ensure that the cases are not too difficult, and to prepare the specialist for higher grade work. The supervisor checks the work of the GS-9 specialists as they complete the development and identification of assigned prints. The supervisor prepares the GS-9 specialist for the rigors of court appearances by such means as moot court proceedings with vigorous cross examination. When testifying in court, GS-9 specialists are considered and referred to as experts in fingerprint identification. This level of responsibility exceeds that of the GS-7 technician who does not appear in court to give expert testimony.

Latent fingerprint assignments at the GS-9 level involve a greater degree of judgment than those at grade GS-7 in such areas as making identifications of latent prints and testifying in court regarding the identification made.

FINGERPRINT SPECIALIST GS-0072-11

Assignment characteristics

Fingerprint specialists at the GS-11 level are assigned complicated and difficult latent print cases, both civil and criminal, that require greater knowledge, judgment, and resourcefulness than those assigned at grade GS-9. Assignments at the GS-11 level typically include:

-- Developing and identifying prints that were left in unstable or perishable substances such as oil, sweat, grease, putty, paint, dust, wax, soap, or blood. Prints may be found on porous or nonporous objects. Porous surfaces, which are generally more difficult to develop prints on, include leather, wood, cloth, and paper;

-- Giving expert testimony in complicated court cases. Typically such cases involve major crimes (murder, sexual offenses, major robberies, etc.), a high degree of public interest (substantial media coverage), and the expectation of severe and searching cross-examination. Typically, too, the fingerprint identification is a major part of the evidence. These factors combine to create a situation which places great importance on the expertise, credibility, and testimony of the fingerprint specialist GS-11;

-- Examining, treating, and developing prints of unknown dead persons. Often this involves working with decomposed, charred, desiccated, or water-soaked hands and fingers. The procedures involved in developing prints under these circumstances require use of a higher degree of skill in using delicate techniques (such as excising and scraping skin and applying cleaning solutions and tissue builders) than is required at the GS-9 level.

Level of responsibility

GS-11 specialists independently plan and carry out assignments that involve more complex technical procedures, more critical identifications, and more sensitive legal problems than those at grade GS-9. The GS-11 specialist, unlike the GS-9, is expected to know the use of all of the powders, chemicals, and lights that are encountered in latent fingerprint identification work. Without specific guidance or instruction, the GS-11 specialist is expected to devise appropriate combinations of techniques and chemical procedures to fit each assignment.

The supervisor spot checks critical portions of the work of the GS-11 specialist and gives advice on such matters as:

-- Evaluating and comparing fragments of fingerprints found on porous surfaces to determine similarities;

-- Preparing testimony in sensitive cases in which identification of a person based on fragments of prints is of critical importance to a trial.

In unusual situations, such as the scene of a catastrophic air crash, the GS-11 specialist is closely supervised by a higher graded specialist. In the normal work of developing and identifying latent prints, the GS-11 specialist exercises greater judgment and authority than the GS-9.

FINGERPRINT SPECIALIST GS-0072-12

Assignment characteristics

GS-12 Fingerprint Specialist assignments typically are those which require the services of recognized experts who possess outstanding knowledges, skills, and abilities in latent fingerprint work. These specialists resolve the most complex, delicate, and sensitive latent fingerprint cases. This requires that they develop, photograph, analyze, and identify prints of fingers, palms, or feet when the identification rests almost entirely on very fragmentary or imperfect impressions. When these cases require court testimony, the prosecutors expect severe challenges to the fingerprint specialist's testimony or to the identification system.

Court testimony may reach this level of difficulty when the case involves, in combination, such elements as a crime of the most serious type (espionage, assassinations, offenses involving public figures, kidnappings, especially heinous murders or sex offenses, especially notorious robberies, etc.), widespread (typically national) public interest and media coverage, and the expectation of severe challenges to the fingerprint specialist's testimony or to the identification system because of the importance of the case, because his testimony is crucial to it, and because his testimony involves identification based on fragmentary or imperfect impressions. Such situations call for the highest level of expertise in fingerprint identification to establish and maintain credibility as a witness.

It is important to bear in mind that it is the difficulty and complexity of the identification and not the type of crime that has been committed or the notoriety of the case that determines the grade-level of the fingerprint specialist position. Care is required to avoid making an assumption, for example, that just because the fingerprint work is related to a kidnapping case, the work is at the grade GS-12 level.

Because of their recognized expertise in the field of latent fingerprint work, GS-12 specialists perform a great variety of project-type assignments which require their high degree of latent fingerprint knowledges, skills, and abilities. The following are illustrative of this level of special assignments:

-- Planning, conducting, and directing:

  • Research studies in latent fingerprint identification;
  • Experiments in new techniques, materials, methods, and equipment;

-- Advising and consulting on the establishment of fingerprint facilities by State and local law enforcement agencies;

-- Inspecting fingerprint facilities;

-- Serving as coordinator-in-charge of a team of fingerprint specialists dispatched to identify victims of major disaster. This entails:

  • Making sure that each victim is processed in the same way;
  • Supervising all aspects of the identification process;
  • Collecting all available information about the victims e.g., dental facts, jewelry, information from relatives or from agents about clothing and other effects.

GS-12 Fingerprint Specialist assignments frequently require contacts with officials such as police chiefs, State attorneys-general and others who are directly trying to obtain the facts about the cases on which the specialist is working. These contacts are often highly controversial and deal with situations that are highly charged because of conflicting viewpoints.

Level of responsibility

GS-12 Fingerprint Specialists receive minimum technical supervision and assistance. Their work is evaluated in terms of overall results. The GS-12 Specialist typically represents the final authority on technical problems.